Shared E-mail Services Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are the benefits driving the Information Technology Oversight Commission's (ITOC) direction toward shared email services?

Productivity enhancements: A shared email environment provides a single Global Address Book across all agencies and the ability to request appointments across agency lines. In today's distributed world, state employees must look up addresses on the website for persons outside their agency and the email administrator must add an alias to the local email address book for persons outside the agency with whom frequent communication is anticipated. State administrative assistants spend significant time trying to organize meetings across agency lines. With shared email services, there will also be shared calendaring functions, allowing AAs to send meeting requests electronically across agency lines as easily as they do within their own agency. This would include the ability to search for the availability of conference room space and request that space simultaneously with the appointment request.

Webmail access for all employees: Increasingly, state employees need email and calendar access from home, while traveling, or from other off-site locations. Web access to email will be a standard offering and can be accessed by any employee with an Internet connection and ISP account.

Single point of security control: Viruses are becoming more prevalent and more sophisticated with each passing day. At the same time, a distributed email environment allows for differing levels of security administration and virus control practices. A single point of control where industry best practices are implemented consistently can reduce the virus and hacker threat for all agencies.

Single point of policy control: Backup, retention, and disaster recovery procedures should be consistent across state government email systems. In a distributed environment, they are not. Shared email services can ensure implementation of a single set of procedures and policies around these critical backend services.

Economies of scale: Email is very sensitive to economies of scale. Whether an agency supports 30 users or 300, there is a minimal level of fixed cost including hardware, software, administration, storage, training of IT professionals, backup, disaster recovery planning, procurement, and virus control. Today these management functions, and minimal technical infrastructure to support them, are performed (or worse, not performed) across 55 different agencies. Clearly, there is room to refocus our scarce technical resources to more value-added projects by executing these functions once instead of multiple times. Estimated savings from Phase I are $150K net first year, $200K in future years.

Adoption of best practice: Private sector companies moved to shared email services years ago to achieve the above stated benefits. Several states have already moved in this

direction and are seeing the benefits today. This is not a new idea. It is a best practice that is new to Indiana state government.

Position the state for better pricing from Microsoft. Moving Phase I agencies to Exchange will increase our volume enough to place us in the next volume category in our licensing agreements with Microsoft. This will not only reduce cost of e-mail licenses, but also reduce the cost of all Microsoft software. These future savings are not included in the estimates listed above under economies of scale. Georgia adopted such a strategy recently and saved $100 per desktop.

My agency is a large agency. Are we really going to benefit from the economies of scale that you mention above?

There is a diminishing point of return on the economies of scale. However, they are significant up to about 1,000 users and economies of scale continue to be achieved up to 5,000 users. At this time, there are only seven (7) agencies with more than 1,000 users and only one (1) of those with more than 5,000. Nonetheless, we will be concentrating initially on agencies with less than 300 users, since this is where the greatest economy can be gained. Phase 2 will focus on agencies with 300 – 1,000 users. In Phase 3, we will work with 1,000+ user agencies.

I've heard that Exchange 2000 and a common Windows 2000 forest will allow us to achieve some of the productivity enhancements mentioned above virtually, i.e. without the need to have a single implementation of email. Is that true and, if so, how does it effect the stated policy?

Yes, many of the benefits mentioned could be realized with a correctly implemented distributed setup. However, the cost incurred in hardware, software, and administration makes an economic case for consolidation of services among smaller agencies. Agencies with more than 1,000 users will be given the opportunity to make a business case for continuing to provide email services internally.

Is there a charge associated with joining the shared email service?

Yes, DoIT charges $5 per mailbox per month. However, agencies with less than 300 mailboxes are incurring costs of $8-$12 per mailbox in staff time and hardware investments. And most of these agencies don't have disaster recovery procedures or provide webmail access to their employees. As the shared email service gains users, economies of scale will be realized in this environment as well. Current cost projections indicate that a $1-$2 decrease per mailbox can be instituted upon the completion of Phase I migrations.

Are there one-time costs associated with the migration to shared email services?

DoIT does have minimal one-time costs for the implementation on the shared email server of $150 plus $2 per mailbox. There are desktop changes that need to be made. The agency may opt to do the desktop work (DoIT will provide instructions) or they can hire DoIT to do that for them. If the agency chooses to do the desktop work, a reasonable amount of phone support will be provided to work through any unusual issues.

If the agency is not using Exchange today, there will be some one-time costs associated with license conversion. Recommended pricing from Microsoft for a competitive upgrade to Exchange 2000 from Groupwise 5.5 is $54.00 per CAL, while Novell's recommended pricing based on 25 user license for an upgrade from Groupwise 5.5 to it's latest version of Groupwise is $73.80. Prices for both may vary based on government discounts and any upgrade support contract an agency may have.

But my agency just bought a brand new email server. Is that a lost investment?

Absolutely not. We recommend that the agency look at server capacity needs within the agency to seek opportunities for redeployment. However, if the agency cannot find an alternative use, DoIT will buy any server less than a year old for the value of its remaining depreciable life. Intel servers are depreciable over a 36-month life, so if you have a server that is 12 months old, DoIT will credit your account equal to two thirds of the purchase price of the server. The server must be one of the QPA brands or Compaq or Dell.

Sometimes we need an account added or deleted immediately. How quickly can DoIT respond in these cases?

When we move to Exchange 2000 by the end of this calendar year, agencies so desiring will be able to manage their own account creation and deletion. They will also be able to create and maintain their own internal distribution lists, disable NT accounts and reset passwords. In the meantime, DoIT appreciates 24 hours notice, but in emergency situations (like an employee termination) they can and do respond very rapidly. A member of the email team will be on call for after hours emergency needs throughout the migration period.

How can I be assured that service to my users will not diminish if I join shared email services?

DoIT has been providing shared email services for 4 years. Beginning with just 30 users, they have earned their current customer base of 15 agencies and over 2000 mailboxes through service delivery and continual cost reduction. Email customers include Alcoholic Beverage Commission, Ethics, Human Resource Investment Council, Indiana Election Commission, Health Professions Bureau, Public Employees Retirement Fund, the Governor's Office, and Information Technology Oversight Commission (yes, we

practice what we preach and have been a customer for more than 3 years). Call them. Ask for references. Recent adopters include Department of Revenue, Department of Administration, and Professional Licensing Agency. Call them. Ask them why they decided to make the move.

What is the timeline?

We are targeting completion of all agencies with less than 300 users by end of first quarter 2002. DoIT currently has 5 agencies in the queue for migration. These will be complete by September 15, 2001, at which time additional migrations can begin. Volunteers will be migrated first. When volunteer agencies are nearing completion, ITOC staff will be contacting all remaining agencies with less than 300 users to set a migration target for each agency.

Why should my agency volunteer now?

1) You have more to get done using technology than you have staff to do it. By moving to shared email service, you can free up valuable staff time to improve delivery of citizen/constituent services.
2) If you are outsourcing your email administration, shared email services are probably cheaper than paying a contractor.
3) If you have any IT contractors on staff, consider moving to shared email services and retraining your email administrator to do work currently performed by contractors and save money.
4) You've recently lost IT staff and need to do the same things today with less people.
5) You are planning a major upgrade or conversion in your email services anyway. Why do it twice?
6) You aren't really satisfied with the reliability of your current email services.
7) You want web access to your email.